

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
11 JANUARY 2011

7.15 TO 9.15 PM

PRESENT: Councillor Dennis Pearce (in the Chair). Councillors Simon Withey, Agatha Akyigyina, Iain Dysart, Karin Forbes, Richard Hilton, James Holmes, Peter McCabe, Krystal Miller, Judy Saunders.

Andrew Boxall, Anna Juster, Ravi Kurup, Colin Powell.

ALSO PRESENT: Councillor Maxi Martin, Cabinet Member for Children's Services, Yvette Stanley (Director, Children, Schools and Families Dept), Paul Ballatt (Head of Commissioning, Strategy and Performance), Jan Martin (Head of Education), Michael Sutherland (Manager - Policy, Planning and Performance), Hilary Gullen (Scrutiny Officer), Susanne Wicks (Democratic Services Officer).

1 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations were made.

2 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Laxmi Attawar.

3 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 NOVEMBER 2010

RESOLVED: That the minutes are agreed as an accurate record.

4 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Item 5: At the request of Councillor Krystal Miller, Hilary Gullen advised that the School Sports Partnership item was suggested at the Scrutiny Topic Selection evening on 9 June 2010, and is listed in the notes taken at the time.

Item 6: Councillor Simon Withey advised that staff and governors at Rutlish School continue to spend a great deal of time dealing with premises related issues.

Hilary Gullen undertook to email Panel members with details of what action is being taken to filling the vacancies for co-opted members on this Panel.

Councillor Agatha Akyigyina advised that Jo Young (Youth Service) would like to receive minutes of meetings earlier than she gets the agenda. Susanne Wicks undertook to email Jo Young and advise her that draft minutes are published on Merton's website when complete and can be accessed that way.

5 ORDER OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
11 JANUARY 2011

RESOLVED: To take item 7 before item 6.

6 IMPLICATIONS OF THE SCHOOLS WHITE PAPER – THE IMPORTANCE OF TEACHING – PRESENTATION

Jan Martin delivered a short presentation detailing the implications of the ‘importance of teaching’ white paper. The report covered the new schools system, the role of the local authority, school improvement, teaching and leadership, behaviour, curriculum, assessment and qualifications, school funding, accountability, school improvement, performance tables, and Ofsted.

Andrew Boxall asked when more detail will be added to the proposals detailed in the white paper. Yvette Stanley explained that the various strands will progress at different rates. The changes to schools funding are being overseen by a national group, and it is hoped that further information will be available in March/April. Yvette Stanley could confirm that the Inner/Outer London Weighting disparity for teachers in Merton would be resolved according to the new funding formula, but said it was hoped that the new system would lead to similar schools being funded at a similar rate.

Yvette Stanley advised that, based on last year’s data, the pupil premium could attract £1.2m funding for Merton’s schools, although the sum received by each school would depend on its size and population.

Yvette Stanley commented on the future role of the local authority with regard to education, and noted that schools will have greater flexibility in purchasing support. However, local knowledge and expertise will continue to be valuable to schools.

Members of the Panel raised concerns about the possible introduction of the Baccalaureate, and in particular the range of foreign languages to be offered.

7 PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Councillor Dennis Pearce reminded the Panel that the new set of indicators presented within the report had been agreed at the previous meeting.

Michael Sutherland went through each of the indicators, focussing in particular on those showing as red, and expanding on the information contained within the report.

With regard to indicators 21 and 22 relating to SEN statements, Councillor Karin Forbes suggested that the 26 week target for statements with exceptions should be lowered, since they so often take more time. Jan Martin responded that the authority was reluctant to lower targets, and from a parents’ perspective, it would be inappropriate to do so.

Jan Martin undertook to provide Andrew Boxall with data regarding the numbers of statements issued during the last year.

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL 11 JANUARY 2011

With regard to youth service participation, Councillor Krystal Miller asked how such participation is measured. Michael Sutherland undertook to send her the definitions used. Councillor Krystal Miller asked if the proposed closure of the South Wimbledon Youth Centre would have any impact on the current performance levels against the youth participation indicator. Paul Ballatt advised that the Youth Service work closely with young people in order to encourage them to engage and participate in activities and this is expected to continue. Councillor Krystal Miller asked to be supplied with attendance data for the year to date.

Michael Sutherland undertook to supply a breakdown of CYP road accident data, including the age groups of children, and types of accident (e.g. bicycle, car, pedestrian).

Report received.

8 CHILDREN'S TRUST – PROGRESS ON LOCAL IMPLEMENTATION

Paul Ballatt introduced this report. He advised that it is felt that Merton's current approach to children's services is the most efficient in order to govern, plan and deliver services to children. The 'every child matters' agenda may not be presented in the same way in future, but it makes sense to continue working towards the five outcomes for children.

Councillor James Holmes expressed his concern that the report did not present any conclusions, although Paul Ballatt's introductory remarks had been very helpful. He also noted that he was not certain from the report what the next steps will be, and there was insufficient detail about forward planning and financial implications.

Paul Ballatt acknowledged the criticism and pointed the Panel to paragraph 2.5 which outlines plans to continue with a Children's Trust Board, and to produce a Children's Plan. He offered to supply more specific information outside of the meeting.

In response to Councillor James Holmes' concerns that there was little within the report which the Panel could usefully debate, Paul Ballatt offered to bring the Children's Plan to a future meeting.

Councillor Krystal Miller questioned why it was planned to continue with the current arrangements when there was no legal obligation to do so. Yvette Stanley advised that the plan has been discussed with all partners involved in the Children's Trust, and it seems a shorter, more focused plan would be preferable. An awayday is planned in order to discuss the future plan, the results of which can be fed back to this Panel.

Councillor Richard Hilton expressed concern about the use of council resources on something which is not a requirement. Paul Ballatt advised that the servicing costs for the Children's Trust is very low, and partner agencies find it very valuable and

CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL
11 JANUARY 2011

recognise the added value it brings.

Councillor Iain Dysart advised that he would like to see a further report giving more detail on work that has taken place by various agencies, and future plans. Councillor Dennis Pearce reminded the Panel that the work programme is complete until the end of the municipal year, and it will be for the Panel next year to decide whether or not to take this item then.

Councillor Maxi Martin gave a brief outline of the establishment of the Children's Trust, and in particular, paid tribute to the commitment and input of Councillor Debbie Shears into ensuring the Trust was firmly established. Councillor Maxi Martin noted that all of the agencies involved have expressed a desire to continue with the Trust. She asked the Panel to support the ongoing work of the Trust and continued production of a single plan.

Report received.

9 WORK PROGRAMME

Councillor Karin Forbes asked why the review of school clusters, present on the work programme, was not on the agenda for this meeting. Yvette Stanley advised that this had been replaced by the presentation on the White Paper. Councillor James Holmes questioned whether it was a good use of the Panel's time to take information items, instead of debating on issues.

The Panel agreed to take a short presentation on the changes to the schools funding regime at the meeting on 8 February. Panel members asked for a summary of information to be supplied in written format prior to the meeting.

The Panel agreed that the meeting on 22 March should focus on the School Standards report, which would encompass the item on educational attainment of underperforming groups. The only other item on the agenda will be a presentation on the implications of the Laming Report.

10 PROVISION FOR YOUNG PEOPLE EXCLUDED FROM OR NOT PARTICIPATING IN SCHOOL – TASK GROUP

Councillor James Holmes introduced this report, and placed on record his thanks to Councillor Nick Draper, who previously chaired the task group. He advised that a further report will be made in June.

Report received.